

Prospects of a Reunion of Churches in England

By W. P. CROZIER

Manchester, England, November—(By Mail). IN ENGLAND it was a favorite topic of discussion between 1914 and 1918 whether the war would lead to a great revival of religion. There was much, especially in the earlier days, which seemed to suggest it. Professions of the highest ideals were made by the leaders of the people and accepted warmly by the rank and file. There was a general consciousness that the country was fighting for a sacred cause. There were reiterated appeals with many degrees of emotion to the approval and support of heaven. It is true that the terms used in this country as in some others seemed sometimes to suggest that it was a strictly nationalistic duty, patriotically supporting the chosen people, whose name was called in aid. Still, the religious idea was more in the air than it had been. Many people unquestionably felt a new need for divine support, just as the prevalence of death in every quarter of the land made them feel, some for the first time, others more sharply than they had ever done before, the need for belief in immortality.

The war has gone and with it the idea of a revival of religion. The ablest of our English deans was asked not long ago to discuss the change which in his opinion had come over religion in England during and because of the war. He replied that there was no change and therefore nothing to discuss. There was, he thought, the same faith and fervor in a fraction of the people, the same conventional support of the general body of churchgoers, the same indifference and apathy on the part of the people as a whole. There is no question about this. So far as the bulk of the population is concerned there is no change of heart, no quickening of spiritual impulse, no revival such as has come over one country or another in religious history from the time of the great founders of religion down to that of John Wesley himself.

No doubt it was foolish to expect that any such revival would take place. After all, war is a method of violence, a reversion to the crude force of barbaric man and normally it stimulates and feeds on every form of passion. It has little contact with the religious spirit except in the moments of exaltation which may coincide with the early aspirations of a great struggle but rarely persist when a prolonged war is working itself out through the appropriate barbaric means. The war spirit still persists and shows itself almost every day in the abrupt and violent activities of the social organism. When under the stress and strain of war, men were driven to work together with more thought of the community than of self, but that is gone or nearly so. Every man for himself is the spirit left by the war, which on the religious side has increased the self-sufficiency of the individual rather than any sense of dependency upon a higher power.

War Has Brought Sentiment

ONE thing, however, the war has done. It has made the churches in England increasingly conscious of their divisions. The divisions of the Christian church have long been a scandal of Christianity and to the layman it has always been astonishing that the devout followers of the churches, and especially the clergy, should have realized so little the discredit which a divided church brings on them. Many of these differences could be justified by no intelligent person. Not to mention the cleavage between the great Orthodox and Roman churches, we have in England here, besides the Church of England, a large number of dissenting or non-conformist denominations and in some cases as in that of the three Methodist bodies (the Wesleyan Methodists, the United Methodists and the Primitives) it would puzzle any ordinary man or woman among their adherents to explain what differences of true religious

belief justify such a severance into separate organizations overlapping in their work, each with its own churches, officials and ministry.

Differences of administration and social distinctions there certainly are, but what has that to do with true religion? When some of these dissenting bodies split off from the parent church the grounds of dissension may have been serious enough, but nowadays they are little more than formal, there is no reality about them and no sincerity of feeling, but to an indifferent public they give ground for constant criticism. If the churches cannot heal their own unsubstantial wounds, how shall they heal the wounds of others that are real? Organized religion is on the decline in England and it is no doubt the recognition of this, together with some stimulus derived from the testing times of the war, which has prompted the clergy, both Anglican and Methodist, to make a new and serious effort for reunion.

Three Movements Under Way

THERE are at the present time three separate movements on foot.

The first is that which has been started by the Anglican church to procure reunion with the Free Churches of England. The Anglicans, of course, desire also reunion with Rome and with the Greek Orthodox church. Some of them, indeed, are very much more anxious about this than about their own countrymen of the Free churches, but the majority of them, being well aware that the differences with Rome are more fundamental, have thought it wiser to begin with their own nonconformists.

There is a project which now approaches its final stage for the reunion of the three Methodist bodies, an achievement, I suppose, long consummated in the United States. This proceeds from the Wesleyan Methodists and the detailed scheme is now before the local governing bodies of the church and if all goes well there may be a successful finish to the negotiations in some two or three years' time.

The third movement is one to form a close federation of the Free churches. There would, that is, be a definite number of representatives of each of the churches acting together on a common council. We have already had for a good many years the so-called Free Church Council. Wesleyan Methodists, however, have always fought a little shy of its political activity. They are the least political of the Methodist organizations and for a long time included a large leavening of Conservatives because they draw more adherents from the prosperous middle class than does any other Methodist church. But this is in every way the least important movement of the three.

The bishops assembled in the great conference at Lambeth recently have made an appeal for Christian reunion. It contains a confession which, considering its source, is one of the most remarkable that has ever been made by an ecclesiastical body. The bishops say that while the original causes of division in the church were not wholly blameworthy, the principal factors in producing them were "self-will, ambition and lack of charity among Christians," and that these highly un-Christian qualities "together with blindness to the sin of disunion" are still mainly responsible for the continuance of division. This is a new voice indeed. Hitherto the ecclesiastics of the church have almost always contended that the divisions were based on differences of principle for which they at least were not responsible and it is clear that as soon as any Christian body becomes willing to confess to error and express

contrition the door to reconciliation is thrown open wide.

The bishops, however, have laid down the conditions of reunion. Some of them will cause no difficulty to Free church men. The acceptance of the Holy Scriptures and of the principal creeds and communions could be accepted without difficulty by almost any Christian. The crux comes with the question of the episcopacy—the status and commission of the bishops. The Lambeth bishops specifically say that they do not deny the "spiritual reality" of the ministries of other communities. They do, however, suggest that the ministers of these other communions should accept reordination at the hands of the bishops. In other words, they are insisting on the doctrine of apostolical succession and this insistence will be widely taken by Free church ministers as denying the validity of their own commissions as ministers in their own churches. The bishops, it is true, suggest that Anglicans on their side should accept some form of commission or recognition such as would commend them to the Free churches. But the fact is that at the present time they do not require any such commission to make them so acceptable and they are therefore offering nothing in comparison with the demand which they make. It is very doubtful, according to present indications, whether the ministers of the Free churches, whatever else they may agree to, would submit to being reordained by the bishops of the Church of England.

Nevertheless, the whole spirit of the bishops marks a great advance. It is the approach not of superiors to inferiors but of equals to equals—a change the more marked in that the Anglican church still represents a higher social standing and a higher learning as compared with nonconformity. It indicates therefore an impulse of the Christian spirit in the bishops and they have given earnest of their sincerity in urging that the Anglican authorities should everywhere invite the other organizations to deliberate with them on the means of bringing about reunion. It will not come yet, but for the first time it has become a question of practical politics.

Methodists' Differences Slight

THE differences between the three Methodist bodies thought to be easy to adjust. They relate rather to administration than to doctrine, to practical details than to principles. There are divergencies among them as to the respective powers and status of the ministers and the laity, the Wesleyans giving a greater authority to the ministers, as becomes their more direct descent from Anglicanism, while the United Methodists and the Primitives accord a larger part in church government to the laymen.

These are constitutional differences, but there are also considerations of sentiment and of social prejudice. Some of the opponents object to merging their "identity" in a larger body, while the Wesleyans for the most part come from a rather higher social stratum than the others. The former, it is sometimes said, is to be found in the Wesleyan Methodist chapel, his laborer in that of the Primitives.

But clearly all this, though it explains why the cleavage between the churches has subsisted so long, has nothing to do with the spirit of Christianity or of true religion. The question of the division of power between ministers and laymen does not justify a breach in the Christian church, let alone a breach which has lasted scores of years. One cannot get away from the belief that the divisions in the church have persisted largely because of the lack of the religious spirit in its leaders, and that because the churches have so much lacked true religion the rest of the community has been content to go without it too.

America Has Greatest Caves

CAVES are no longer the dwelling place of man but they are still among the most curious of natural wonders. They are so dark and mysterious, and many of them have such interesting histories, that our curiosity concerning them is as keen as in the days when they were the hiding places of bandits and pirates.

The United States perhaps has more unusual cave formations than any other country. In the first place, we have the largest one, as far as has been discovered. This is the Mammoth Cave, about 85 miles from Louisville, Kentucky.

Parts of this great cave have been explored for a distance of over 150 miles and maps made so that the guides themselves cannot get lost. The main body of the cave is only about three miles long, yet parts of this section furnish the famous halls and domes, some of which are 175 feet wide and 125 feet high.

This cavern has many small lakes and rivers, the best known of these being Echo River, which reverberates an echo to an untold distance, repeating the sound of your voice until only a whisper is heard at the last. The fish in this and the other bodies of water are white and have no eyes. There are also crickets, bats, flies, beetles, spiders and other queer blind creatures to be found here, and it is interesting to watch them when they are taken out into the light. Being blind, their movements are quite slow and cautious when compared to their kind that are alive out in the open.

In taking a hike through this world's largest cave the guides light up the way so that many beautiful things can be seen, such as the Star Chamber, where the lofty ceiling is studded with snowy crystals that glisten like diamonds. When white men first discovered Mammoth Cave they found many stone arrowheads, pieces of torches and other relics which indicated that it once had been a meeting place for the

Indians, and for all we know countless numbers of war dances may have taken place in the famous Star Chamber just mentioned.

Wyandotte Cave is another one of our great caverns and ranks next to Mammoth Cave both in size and interest. It is in Crawford County, Indiana, and so far has been explored for more than twenty-three miles. In its depths are found many formations similar to those of its bigger sister, one of the chambers being 200 feet high and 300 feet broad. The temperature and moisture in the air are so even that you can walk a great distance without feeling the least fatigue until coming out into the open once more. But if you happen to be one of those few folks who do not indulge in hikes you'll certainly feel the results of the long walk after sitting around for a few minutes.

In Page County, Virginia, is Luray Cave, where many things of interest are to be found. One room in this cavern is called the Fish Market, on account of the flat fishlike stalactites that are arranged about the walls, and many visitors have declared that they can recognize the forms of several kinds of fish. In Giant's Hall there are many bright rocks that glisten in the torchlight, while in what is called the Cathedral there is a stone organ formed of different lengths of this substance, which upon being struck with a piece of metal gives out musical tones. Simple music can be played upon it, and of course the various echoes cause it to sound like several instruments being played, each of them in just a little slower time.

Numerous other fairly large caves are to be found in our country, as there is scarcely a section of it in

which none is found, but the three mentioned are the most famous ones, so we now pass over to Europe for more interesting items about caves. The largest one in Ireland is Fingal's Cave, situated on the Island of Staffa, off the coast, and originally formed by the constant washing of the waves. There is very little room to hike around in this cave, for most of the floor is of water, but when the sea is calm a nice boat trip can be taken into its depths. Fingal's Cave is 42 feet wide at the entrance, 22 feet wide at the end and 66 feet high, which, of course, makes it seem quite small after speaking of our big inland caves, but it must be remembered that this cavern was formed by the waves of the sea alone, so this fact makes it very remarkable.

England and Scotland have many caves, though most of them are small. Along the rocky coast of Scotland can be found caverns formed by the waves, but in Peak Cave, Derbyshire, England, there is much of interest. One peculiar thing about the English caves is the marvelous relics found there, Peak Cave having furnished the greater number. When first explored it contained fossil remains of rhinoceroses, lions, hyenas and other wild beasts now found in parts of Asia and Africa. This seems to indicate that England was once a tropical country. Stone axes, hammers and other implements also were found, showing that the people of that day lived in caves. Peak Cave is not a very large one, as it is only about a mile in length and 600 feet below the surface.

The deepest cave known in the world is one found near Fredericksburg, Norway, it being 11,000 feet. Think down into its depths, for many of the wonders of nature are to be found there. However, when it comes to real beauty and interest there are no caves that can excel our own.